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633 736 those who were ill-treated, took in the lost or abandoned, settled many family matters involving children.

From the early part of 1937 the Council embarked on a somewhat more concrete plan of child protection. For the programme which developed, the wider term of child welfare cannot be used, for it did not concern itself with instruction to mothers in the care of children, or provision of monetary assistance to families with children, development of kindergarten schools, or nurseries, or playgrounds—any of the "welfare" features so well understood elsewhere. Because of the special problems of Shanghai, emphasis was placed first on the field of "protection."

633 736 597 567 357 THE ORIGIN OF THE Council's recent concern with child protection is traceable to requests of the Slavery Committee of the League of Nations that it give attention to the problem of *mui tsai* or *pei nu,* so-called girl slaves. Through past centuries and down to the present, the prevailing poverty of China caused poor families in certain areas of the country to give their daughters to richer families better able to support them. During childhood and adolescence they are employed in domestic service, and then are married to husbands who have been found for them by their employers. It is obvious that this system provides possibilities of exploitation. Separated from their own relatives and in the control of others, these *mui tsai* can be worked very hard, even mistreated. In the view of the League of Nations Committee, there were elements in the situation suggestive of slavery. On the other hand, many instances were known of girls being well cared for in the homes to which they went. The League Committee, examining as it did many customs in different parts of the world where lack of freedom and of control over their own destinies characterised the lives of various groups, had urged on the governments in control of the regions in question the adoption of measures to alleviate the lot of the groups concerned. In the Far East, the League's views regarding *mui tsai* had been impressed on the governments of China, Hongkong and Malaya.

Accordingly, early in 1937 the Shanghai Municipal Council placed some responsibility on the Industrial and Social Division. The Chief of the Division was named "Protector of *mui tsai.*" The Division believed, however, that the task had been too narrowly

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conceived, and accordingly undertook as a first step the examination of the general question of the place of authorities in the protection of *mui tsai* and other groups of young persons "transferred into the control of others not near relatives and exploited by them."

A study was made during 1937 and 1938, delayed somewhat by the outbreak of Sino-Japanese hostilities in the latter half of 1937 and by the abnormal situation extending into 1938. A report was presented to the Council, and in November 1938 forwarded to the League of Nations for the use of its Slavery Committee. It was adopted by the Council on December 14, 1939. It recommended that a Child Protection Service be established in the Division. Some of the report's more relevant portions, chosen to show the range of the problem, follow:

"Case histories have been taken firstly of 176 girls who are *pei nu*[1] or in domestic conditions nearly allied to this: secondly of 72 girls who have been sold or mortgaged into a life of prostitution: thirdly of 27 girls bound by contract to a period of service in industrial undertakings where their earnings are the property of a contractor.

"Only a partial picture would have been presented if the study of *pei nu* only had been made, for unless the custom of transfer of girl children into the control of others than their immediate relatives and into domestic employment which is the essence of *pei nu* is seen in relation to other conditions which may have common features with this custom, there cannot be an intelligent recommendation as to administrative action regarding *pei nu*. In the question as to whether administrative action should be taken in respect of one group, the larger field must be seen.

"In all three types of transfer, whether for a longer or shorter period, money passes between the person transferring and the person to whom transferred. *Pei nu* as a rule being transferred at an early age, the amount of money passed in respect of them is small—from $20 to $30 in most cases. In respect of the girl mortgaged for a period of years into prostitution, the sum demanded is found in the studies to be higher than when a girl is disposed of outright to the brothel keeper, and in both cases more than for a *pei nu*. No girls interviewed were mortgaged into prostitution for less than $100 for a three-year period while there were several cases of girls disposed of for an indefinite period for less than this amount. Presumably some more enterprising entrepreneur, who knows how to create values, handled the girls who are mortgaged. The sum for which girls are bound into labour for two or three years is only from $30 to $45.

"It is immediately obvious that there is a wider custom of transfer into the control of others than is exemplified in the *pei nu* group. This

[1] [girl slaves -- Analyst]